570-214-1028-A

WRITE NEWS/SPORTS COPY

TEC Lesson 570-214-1028-A

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OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS
DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20310

STUDENT/SUPERVISOR INSTRUCTIONS, PRE-TEST/POST-TEST, AND ANSWER KEY CONTAINED IN THIS BOOK

REVISED JANUARY 1985

D 101.6/7:

READEX best copy available

READ THE STUDENT/SUPERVISOR INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY. BE SURE YOU UNDERSTAND THEM COMPLETELY BEFORE BEGINNING THE LESSON. PLEASE DO NOT WRITE IN THIS BOOK.

The words "he," "his," and "men," when used in this publication, represent both the masculine and feminine genders, unless otherwise specifically stated.

STUDENT/SUPERVISOR INSTRUCTIONS

TYPE OF LESSON

- Broadcast Journalism

AUDIENCE

- Broadcast Journalists
- Skill levels 1-4

TRAINING OBJECTIVES

Soldiers completing this lesson will be able to:

- Develop and write a broadcast news/sports release using proper mechanics and style.
- Identify the proper format for radio and television broadcast copy.

MATERIAL/EQUIPMENT REQUIRED

- Pencil
- Paper
- Typewriter
- Dictionary

TIME REQUIRED

- Individual: Two Hours
- Group: Two Hours

REFERENCES

- DINFOS Broadcast Writing Style Guide
- UPI Broadcast Stylebook
- AP Broadcast News Handbook

STUDENT/SUPERVISOR INSTRUCTIONS

STUDENT INSTRUCTIONS

- Take the Pre-test/Post-test. If you pass, you do not have to take the lesson.
- Make sure you have the material and equipment required to complete the lesson.
- Take the lesson. Use a separate sheet of paper for the exercises. Do not write in this book.
- When you complete the lesson, take the Pre-test/Post-test again. If you do not pass, take the lesson again.

SUPERVISOR INSTRUCTIONS

- Administer the Pre-test/Post-test to determine the need for the lesson. Responses to test questions must be made on a separate sheet of paper, not in the lesson book. To pass the test, a soldier must answer 25 of the 30 test items correctly.
- Make sure the students have the material and equipment required to take the lesson.
- Administer the lesson to students who do not pass the Pre-test/Post-test. Remind them to write their responses to the exercises on a separate sheet of paper and not in the lesson book.
- Administer the Pre-test/Post-test to students who complete the lesson. Students who do not pass must take the lesson again.

TEC LESSON 570-214-1028-A

Write News/Sports Copy

This test consists of 18 questions that cover every training objective of the lesson. When you have completed the test, check your answers against the Pre-test/Post-test answer key on page 43. The questions have a total point value of 30. If you do not score at least 25 points you must take the lesson or take it again if you have already taken it. Write your responses on a separate sheet of paper. Do not write in this book.

1. List the six C's of Broadcast Writing.

   _____ _____ _____
   _____ _____ _____

2. Punctuation in broadcast writing is used to _____
   _____.

3. A broadcast news lead sentence generally should not exceed _____ words.

   a. 10
   b. 15
   c. 20
   d. 25

4. Convert the following list of words, symbols and numbers to broadcast style. For example: 6% is written as six percent.

	normal	broadcast
a.	$25,000.00	_____
b.	0.8	_____
c.	8:30 a.m.	_____
d.	4.6	_____
e.	XVIII Corps	_____

5. Contractions should be used in broadcast copy:

   a. sparingly
   b. only in the body of the story
   c. whenever possible
   d. never

6. "Here" is okay to use in broadcast copy as long as it is apparent from your release heading where "here" is.

   a. True
   b. False

7. Which of the following shows proper placement of a title in broadcast copy?

   a. GENERAL HARRISON, POST COMMANDER
   b. POST COMMANDER, GENERAL HARRISON

8. Attribution in a broadcast story should be placed:

   a. at the beginning of the sentence.
   b. at the end of the sentence.
   c. wherever it sounds the most conversational.

9. Direct quotations in broadcast copy:

   a. should be avoided.
   b. should be used frequently.
   c. should only be used for statements by high ranking officials.

10. Phonetic spellings should be used in broadcast copy:

    a. after all names.
    b. after all numbers.
    c. as footnotes.
    d. whenever a difficult word is used in the copy.

11. Acronyms in broadcast copy:

    a. should never be used.
    b. should be spelled out on the first reference.

12. The average announcer reads broadcast copy at _____ words per minute.

    a. 50
    b. 75
    c. 100
    d. 150

13. Video information in a television script appears on which side of the script?

    a. left
    b. right

14. A radio news script is usually typed using a _____ space line.

    a. 15
    b. 30
    c. 45
    d. 60

15. List the items found in a four unit heading on a broadcast release.

    a. _____
    b. _____
    c. _____
    d. _____

16. Which of the following best describes the type of lead found in a broadcast news story?

    a. It does not exceed one paragraph.
    b. It contains the five w's.
    c. It is a general what happened lead.
    d. All of the above.

17. A device used to pace a newscaster during a voice-over is a/an?

    a. teleprompter
    b. on-cue
    c. hand cue

18. When writing broadcast sports copy, where should you tell your audience who won the game?

    a. in the lead
    b. in the bridge
    c. at the end of the story

TEC LESSON

INTRODUCTION

As a military broadcast journalist you will be called upon to compile, write, edit and air news and sports stories. These stories could be used for broadcast on both military and commercial radio and television stations.

In this lesson you will learn how to write an effective broadcast news release. After a brief overview of the principles of broadcast news and sports writing, we will take an in depth look at punctuation, word usage and the mechanics involved in broadcast writing.

A broadcast news story is:

- an account of a timely event.
- of interest or consequence to the listener or viewer.
- informative rather than entertaining.
- substantiated fact, not opinion or hearsay.

There are six basic rules in writing broadcast copy. They are referred to as the six C's.

- **CLEAR**—Clear copy is easy for the listener or viewer to follow. It is written in a simple way which is easily understood the first time it is heard. Remember a listener or viewer can not go back and reread the story as he can with a newspaper.

- **CONCISE**—Trim away the excess and just use words that are essential to your story.

- **CONVERSATIONAL**—Read your story aloud when it is finished. If it is difficult to read in parts, go back and change it. Use contractions to help make your story flow. For example, it is more conversational to say it's rather than it is.

- **COMPLETE**—Don't leave any important information out. Be sure you cover the who, what, when, where, why and how of the story.

- **CURRENT**—Provide the most up-to-date information available and make the release as soon as possible.

- **CORRECT**—Check and double-check all the facts. Corrections made over the air on radio or TV often reach an entirely different audience. The person who was listening when the story was first aired may not be listening when the correction is made. Make corrections before your copy is released!

Broadcast copy should be crisp and clear. Sentences should be short. The average broadcast sentence is 17 to 25 words in length. The average announcer speaks at the rate of 150 words per minute.

TEC LESSON

Punctuation in broadcast writing is used to help the announcer. A comma tells the announcer to pause, a hyphen helps the announcer to pronounce difficult words and parentheses normally tell him not to read the enclosed material aloud.

In broadcast writing, simple words say it best. Choose words that everyone, the announcer as well as the listener, will understand. Colorful and descriptive words add life to your copy.

Write broadcast copy in the active voice. The active voice will help you tell your story quicker and better. The passive voice normally weakens the impact of a sentence.

Since broadcasters report events as they happen, the present tense is the natural tense. However, the verb tense that is most natural to a situation will be the most effective. Every story does not have to sound as if it happened the moment before the newscaster went on the air.

Your lead sentence, a "general what happened" lead, should get the listener's attention and prepare him for what is to come. In most stories, a lead tends to lose its effectiveness when it becomes too long and complex.

After you have written the lead to your broadcast story, the specifics of the story are logically developed in the body of your story. Logical development is no more than an orderly development of information which flows smoothly to an end.

Absolutely clean copy which is free of mistakes is the rule for copy designed for outside release to radio and television stations. Sloppy copy is a distraction to an announcer.

In this lesson, you'll learn how to develop the lead and body of a news story using all available techniques in order to produce a clear, concise, accurate and timely release.

TEC LESSON

PUNCTUATION

The Period

As in any writing, the period indicates the end of a sentence or thought. More periods are used in broadcast writing because news sentences are generally shorter and more conversational than print media sentences.

The Comma

Use the comma to indicate a pause shorter than that of the period. Don't use a comma unless you want the announcer to pause.

The Dash

Use the dash to set off appositives and other parenthetical expressions.

EXAMPLE: NATO—THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION—VOTED THIS MORNING....

The Hyphen

Use a hyphen to help announcers in phrasing difficult words and to instruct them to pronounce individual elements distinctly. Use hyphens between letters in abbreviations instead of periods.

EXAMPLE: RE-ADJUSTED, OVER-REACT, ANTI-TRUST, RE-ALLOCATE

EXAMPLE: W-I-K-W, F-B-I, Y-M-C-A, A-F-K-N, U-S, A-M, P-M

Ellipsis

Occasionally, you can use a series of three dots to indicate a pause longer than that of a comma. The series of three dots can also be used for dramatic effect:

EXAMPLE: THE JURY FOREMAN ANNOUNCED IN A CLEAR FIRM VOICE . . . "INNOCENT!"

Quotation Marks

In addition to their normal use for indicating quotes, quotation marks can also be used by announcers as an aid to set off nicknames, titles of books and plays, etc.

EXAMPLE: THE DIVISION—BETTER KNOWN AS THE "BIG RED ONE"—BEGINS . . .

Parentheses

In broadcast copy, material in parentheses is normally not meant to be read aloud. Rather, it includes notes to the announcer such as pronunciation guides. Note how the pronunciation guide or phonetic spelling and the word being phoneticized are on the same line.

EXAMPLE: POLICE ARRESTED FOUR MEN IN TERRE HAUTE (TERRA-HOTE), INDIANA LAST NIGHT . . .

SPEAKING OF WORDS

Again, remember that in broadcast news writing, simple words say it best. Choose words that everyone, the announcer as well as the listener, will understand. Don't ignore colorful or descriptive words. Colorful treatment, however, is usually reserved for feature writing or stories containing human interest items.

Contractions

In day to day conversation, contractions are used rather liberally. Therefore, you should consider using contractions whenever possible to make your copy more conversational. For example, "it's" is more conversational than "it is." A definite exception to this rule is the "it will" contraction, "it'll," which is awkward when you're trying to read it into a microphone.

Pronouns

There is a danger in using personal pronouns in broadcast copy. When using he, she or they, make certain there can be no doubt in the listener's mind as to whom you're referring. The ear can't go back and pick-up the identification. Repeat the noun if there is any question.

Alliterations

Beware of alliterations. When you compose a sentence consisting of several words beginning with the same vowels or consonants, you have alliteration and the announcer may have a problem.

EXAMPLES: THE WESTERLY WINDS WILL WHIP WRATH WITHIN WINDSOR, WISCONSIN . . .

THE DEVASTATED DAM DUMPED DEBRIS AND DIRT ON DES MOINES . . .

TEC LESSON

Sibilants

Beware of too many sibilants ("s" and "sh" sounds). They tend to create a hissing sound when read aloud.

EXAMPLE: THE SIX SOLDIERS STOOD SHOULDER TO SHOULDER AS SECRETARY OF STATE SHEPHERD SHELTON . . .

This problem also arises quite often in the use of the apostrophe when showing possession.

Here and There

"Here" to the listener or viewer is wherever the listener or viewer is at the time of your broadcast. The word, "here," in reference to a location, could be any place it's heard. Avoid it.

Libelous Words

So called "red flag" words, if used improperly in your story, could lead to libel. Be careful not to confuse "colorful treatment" in your story with words like: atheist, fascist, Nazi, seducer, bigamist, illegitimate, deadbeat, addict, etc.

Not Not

Avoid the use of the word "not" in your copy. "Not" can accidently be dropped out of your copy and leave the listener wondering if he heard "not" or not.

EXAMPLES:

USE	AVOID
DISHONEST	**NOT HONEST**
INNOCENT	**NOT GUILTY**
FORGOT	**DID NOT REMEMBER**
IGNORED	**DID NOT PAY ATTENTION TO**
UNABLE	**NOT ABLE**

Other meaningless Words

Avoid meaningless word—LATTER, FORMER AND RESPECTIVELY—when referring to persons, places or things already mentioned. Listeners have difficulty referring back.

Likewise, avoid transitional phrases within your stories such as MEANWHILE, MEANTIME AND INCIDENTALLY. They're crutches. While each thought, phrase or paragraph should flow to the next, it should be done with skillful organization, not with throw-away transitional words.

Steer clear of flowery phrases and trite expressions that take up time and space and add nothing. Avoid slang in news writing.

Always translate military jargon and technical, legal or foreign terms into simple language.

EXAMPLES:

USE	AVOID
ASSIGNED	DETAILED
BEFORE	PRIOR TO
ENLISTMENT	HITCH
IF	IN THE EVENT OF
SAID	CLAIMED
SENT	TRANSMITTED

Good Taste

Good taste in broadcast copy is paramount. Make sure your choice of words, phrases and manner of presenting information won't embarrass your command, your service, the United States government, or the host country, if overseas.

Handling Titles and Names

Avoid leading into a broadcast story with a person's name. In the case of an unknown person, definitely don't use a name to begin your story, unless you're striving for a special effect. This would be a rare instance in news writing.

In the case of names and titles being used together, titles should precede names.

EXAMPLE:

BAD: MELANIE LYNN, EXCHANGE MANAGER . . .

GOOD: EXCHANGE MANAGER MELANIE LYNN . . .

This alerts listeners to whom you're about to name with the person's title.

Official Titles

Federal office holders will be referred to by title or as "Mister," or Mrs. That is, PRESIDENT REAGAN or MR. REAGAN; MR. BUSH OR VICE PRESIDENT BUSH; SENATOR KENNEDY or MR. KENNEDY; SECRETARY DOLE or MRS. DOLE.

TEC LESSON

Difficult Names

If a difficult name is unessential, use the person's title, such as the Ambassador from Tanzania . . .

Quoting the Source

Attribution (quoting the source) is a greater problem for radio and TV newsmen than for newspaper writers. The solid rule against wordiness in radio and TV means throwing out every word unless it adds something.

Too much attribution in radio and TV news slows the action and dulls the color. On the other hand, too little attribution may leave the listener confused.

Only experience supplies the answer but it may help to remember this:

ATTRIBUTE WHENEVER ANYTHING WHICH IS SAID MIGHT BE DISPUTED BY ANYONE ANY TIME IN THE FUTURE.

In broadcasting, attribution must be made at the start of a sentence, so there can be no doubt that what follows is a viewpoint of John Doe and not the announcer. The trend in radio and television is to use less attribution than newspapers in writing "official" news. Frequently, radio and television news writers delay attribution in such news until after the lead.

As an example, here's a print story.

INDIANAPOLIS—An investigation into alleged corruption in the state's Department of Motor Vehicles was initiated today, Governor John E. Doe announced at a special news conference here this morning.

It could be written for the air in the following manner:

THE STATE IS INVESTIGATING ALLEGED CORRUPTION IN THE DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES. GOVERNOR JOHN DOE MADE THE DISCLOSURE THIS MORNING AT AN INDIANAPOLIS NEWS CONFERENCE.

Direct Quotations

Whenever possible direct quotes should be avoided. Handling direct quotations on the air requires a special technique for the simple reason that the listener can't see the quotation marks.

To meet this problem newscasters have developed two devices:

1. **DON'T USE LONG DIRECT QUOTES. Paraphrase them into indirect quotes.**

EXAMPLE:

Direct Quote:

BAD: **Specialist Johnson said, "I am not guilty," at the opening of his cou.t martial today.**

Indirect Quote:

GOOD: **SPECIALIST JOHNSON SAID HE WAS INNOCENT, AT THE OPENING OF HIS COURT MARTIAL TODAY.**

2. If you do use a direct quote always use some device so the listener will know exactly when a direct quotation begins and ends. But be very sparing with the expression "quote and unquote." It makes for awkward delivery.

EXAMPLE:

Awkward: **General Jones, said, quote, "the needless and irresponsible" unquote**

Better: **General Jones attacked what he calls needless and irresponsible . . .**

Initials

Generally it is best to omit the middle initial of a person's name unless it is a well known part of the name such as JOHN F. KENNEDY. The other exception to this is the case where the nature of the story requires further clarification: such as for births and deaths.

Phonetic Spelling

If there's a way for an announcer to mispronounce a name or an unusual word, he'll do it. Give him all the help you can. How? Write the phonetic spelling in parentheses and place it immediately after the troublesome word. Be sure to underline the phonetic syllable that is to be accented or stressed.

EXAMPLE: **SERGEANT KUHNE (KOO-NEE) ENTERED . . .**
MUNICH (MEW-NICK) GERMANY IS THE HOME . . .

Make sure the phonetic spelling appears on the same line as the word it represents.

Abbreviations

When abbreviations are used in broadcast copy they are intended to be read as such. The use of well known abbreviations is permissible, such as Y-M-C-A, F-B-I, U-S, U-N, A-M, P-M. You may also use MR., MRS., MS., AND DR. "ST." may be used instead of "SAINT" in cases such as ST. LOUIS OR ST. PAUL.

Do not abbreviate the names of military installations. Use FORT (not FT.) BENNING. It is NAVAL AIR STATION (not NAS). It is UNITED STATES, or U-S, AIR FORCE . . . not USAF.

Never Abbreviate

- Names of states, cities, countries, political parties (except G-O-P)
- Days of the week
- Months
- Titles of officials
- Address identification such as street, avenue, drive or boulevard

Avoid starting a sentence with an abbreviation. A good rule to remember concerning the use of abbreviations in broadcast copy is WHEN IN DOUBT, WRITE IT OUT.

Acronyms

When using an unfamiliar abbreviation or acronym which will be pronounced as a word, be sure to spell it out in the first usage.

EXAMPLE: THE DEFENSE INFORMATION SCHOOL, COMMONLY CALLED DINFOS . . .

or

THE CHIEF OF NAVY INFORMATION, KNOWN AS CHINFO . . .

Numbers

To insure clarity, broadcasters have their own style for figures. From one to nine—write out: one, two, three, etc., unless used for sports scores, time or dates. From 10 to 999, use numerals. Be sure to write out hundred, thousand, million, billion.

EXAMPLE: 15-HUNDRED not 1,500

Write dates as OCTOBER 1ST, 2ND, 3RD, 31ST and use four digit numerals for years such as 1980 or 1991.

MORE NUMERICAL EXAMPLES

MONEY	10-THOUSAND DOLLARS
FRACTIONS:	TWO-THIRDS
PERCENTAGES:	SIX PER CENT
TELEPHONE NUMBERS:	542-4014
ADDRESSES:	953 EAST 42ND STREET
AGES:	12-YEAR OLD MARY SMITH
TIME:	10:30 THIS MORNING
DECIMALS:	11-POINT-SIX
ROMAN NUMERALS:	LOUIS THE 16TH
	POPE JOHN PAUL THE SECOND
RATINGS:	NUMBER ONE TEAM
SCORES:	9 TO 4
ODDS:	THREE TO ONE
LICENSES:	H-L-L 1213
HEIGHT:	FIVE-FEET-FIVE INCHES
MILITARY UNITS:	(WRITTEN AS THEY ARE SPOKEN) USAREUR, USAFE, SEVENTH FLEET, 11TH CORPS, 821ST SUPPLY BATTALION.
EQUIPMENT DESIGNATIONS:	C-FIVE "GALAXY," M-ONE TANK, M-16 RIFLE

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SELF-EVALUATION EXERCISE

Exercise 1:

1. The six C's of broadcast writing are:

   a. clear, concise, conversational, complete, current, correct
   b. concise, current, clever, conversational, cluttered, complete
   c. correct, controlled, conversational, clear, concise, current
   d. concise, clear, conversational, complete, correct, careful

2. In broadcast copy, a person's title should be placed:

   a. before his name
   b. after his name

3. The amount $50,000.00 used in broadcast copy when it does not begin a sentence is written as:

   a. $50,000.00
   b. 50,000 DOLLARS
   c. 50-THOUSAND DOLLARS

4. XXV Corps is written as ____ _____ for broadcast copy.

   a. 25TH CORPS
   b. TWENTY-FIFTH-CORPS
   c. 20-FIFTH CORPS

5. When phonetic spellings are used in broadcast copy, where should they be placed?

   a. as footnotes
   b. on the line preceding the phoneticized word
   c. immediately after the word to be phoneticized
   d. on the line below the word to be phoneticized

6. Which one of the following words should be avoided in broadcast copy?

   a. isn't
   b. won't
   c. not
   d. you'll

ANSWERS TO SELF-EVALUATION EXERCISE

Self-evaluation Exercise 1:

1. a. clear, concise, conversational, complete, current, correct
2. b. before the name
3. c. 50-THOUSAND DOLLARS
4. d. 25TH CORPS
5. c. immediately after the word to be phoneticized
6. c. not

MECHANICS

Upper Case

All caps or upper and lowercase . . . Do you type broadcast copy in all-caps or in upper and lowercase letters? Frankly, it's up to you. Many stations insist on all caps. Some studies show, however, that copy typed in upper and lowercase letters is easier to read and interpret. If you decide to use upper and lowercase, beware of not capitalizing words which should be capitalized. Remember, if you are providing the copy to a broadcast outlet, check with them and see if they want it all upper case or upper and lowercase.

Timing Your Copy

Announcers read at varying speeds, but the average is two and one half words a second. This would put the word count at approximately 150 words for a 60-second radio story, or 75 words for a 30-second story.

Radio

The Defense Information School format calls for typerwriter margins—elite or pica type—to be set for an average 60 spaces per line. Your 60-space line of radio copy will give you around 10 words per line.

So 14 to 16 lines of copy will yield about 60 seconds. Seven to eight lines will average 30 seconds while two to four lines will work out to about 10 seconds of copy.

Television

Television copy averages five words per line, with typewriter margins set for a 35-space line. Video information goes on the left and audio on the right.

Numbering pages

If your broadcast story is more than one page, pages are numbered consecutively, for example: 1 of 3, 2 of 3, 3 of 3. At the end of the last page you signal the end of your story by using three dunphy symbols (###) below your copy.

TEC LESSON

Heading

The four unit heading consists of the following items:

- **slugline**
- **date**
- **length of copy**
- **type of release**

Slugline

The title or headline of the story.

Date

The date your copy will be released.

Copy Length

How long it will take to read your story.

Type of Release

There are four basic types of release lines that can go on your copy:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE—use on news stories when the copy can be used upon receipt by the station.

FOR GENERAL RELEASE—use on spot announcements or feature items that do not require immediate airing.

DO NOT USE AFTER (Time and Date)—use on spot announcements or news items about events for a limited time.

HOLD FOR RELEASE UNTIL (Time and Date)—use on advance releases.

The following is an example of a four unit heading.

TRAFFIC ACCIDENT KILLS SOLDIERS OCTOBER 1, 1984

(30 SECONDS) FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

XXXXXXXX XXXXX XXXXXXXX XXXX XXXXX XXXXX X
XXXXX XXXXX XXXXX XXXXX XXXXX XXXXXXXXXXX XX

SELF-EVALUATION EXERCISE

Exercise 2:

1. When preparing copy for a broadcast outlet, how should you type it?

   a. Type the copy in all caps.
   b. Use upper and lower case.
   c. Check with the outlet for their preference.

2. A 60-second radio news story will equal approximately how many lines of copy?

   a. 8 to 10
   b. 10 to 12
   c. 14 to 16
   d. 18 to 20

3. The four unit heading on a broadcast release consists of:

   a. writer's name, date, # of pages, phone number
   b. slugline, copy length, release line, date

4. You are preparing a television news story. On which side of the paper do you type the audio?

   a. left
   b. right

ANSWERS TO SELF-EVALUATION EXERCISE

Self-evaluation Exercise 2:

1. c. Check with the outlet for their preference.
2. c. 14 to 16
3. b. slugline, copy length, release line, date
4. b. right

THE LEAD

The word "lead" is newspaper jargon. It was developed as a specialized way of getting all the prominent facts into the top of a newspaper story. Original intent of the newspaper lead was to crowd into the first sentence the five W's of the story—who, what, where, when, why and how. This often resulted in long, cumbersome, overloaded sentences that even the most careful reader found confusing.

Radio news writers were quick to recognize that the "hard" newspaper lead, was not suitable for the ear.

The hard lead put too many important facts into the air too soon and beyond recall before listeners were ready to hear and understand those facts. So radio writers developed the "soft" lead to catch the listener's attention and ease him into the story with a major fact or two, preparing him for the other facts which followed.

THE SOFT LEAD

The philosophy of the soft lead is simple. The ear can hear and transmit to the brain only a certain number of signals within a given time. The ear must be alerted and be prepared to hear these signals.

The soft lead must arouse the listener's interest. But it must not give so many facts as to confuse the listener and leave him confused throughout the story. Actually the listener may be only half listening until his attention is seized by something the announcer says.

LEAD MECHANICS

Remember then, in the broadcast news story the first or lead sentence describes the central news fact or the most important facts rather than giving a full summary of the story. The lead sentence must gain the attention of the listener and orient him to the facts that will follow in the body of the story. The radio newswriter does this by telling the listener WHAT HAPPENED.

Thus the lead sentence tells "what" and then works the other W's into the sentence as needed for listener understanding. A broadcast lead should not exceed 20 words.

TEC LESSON

A "general W" in radio newswriting is the approximate identification of the fact.

EXAMPLE: "A FORT JACKSON SOLDIER" is a "general who," and "TODAY" is a "general when."

A "specific W" in radio newswriting is the exact identification of the fact.

EXAMPLE: "SPECIALIST FOUR JOHN DOE" is a "specific who."

A "specific who" in the lead sentence should be used only when the person in the news is nationally or internationally known. Otherwise, do not use the name of the person in the lead sentence.

Lead construction

Don't try to tell too much in your opening sentence. The radio listener requires a little time to get adjusted after each story. It's called "warming up the listener." Radio leads should be simple, but not so over-simplified that they fail to tell the story. An attention-getting lead that sells the story to the listener at the outset will keep his interest and make him want to hear more. A dull, slow moving lead that wastes two or three sentences before dishing out the meat of the story probably will lose the listener.

Unfamiliar Names

Don't start a radio or TV story with an unfamiliar name. If the name is important enough to use, it should be important to the listener. If you start a story with an unfamiliar name before getting the listener's attention, the listener may never actually hear the name. Of course, if the name is known to most listeners and will be immediatley recognized, it's all right to start with it.

EXAMPLE:

Poor broadcast lead:

SERGEANT PHIL HAMBRICK, ASSIGNED TO THE U-S ARMY BAND AT FORT BENJAMIN HARRISON, TODAY WAS AWARDED THE SOLDIER'S MEDAL.

Better broadcast lead:

A FORT HARRISON SOLDIER WAS AWARDED THE SOLDIER'S MEDAL TODAY. SERGEANT PHIL HAMBRICK . . .

Starting With a Title

Frequently, a title can be used as a warm-up. In other words, the title is placed before the name. The title catches the listener's attention where the unfamiliar name might not.

EXAMPLE:

Poor Broadcast Lead:

JOHN DOE, POST ENGINEER AT FORT KNOX, SAID GARBAGE COLLECTIONS WOULD BE INCREASED NEXT MONTH.

Better Broadcast Lead:

THE POST ENGINEER SAYS GARBAGE COLLECTIONS AT FORT KNOX WILL INCREASE NEXT MONTH. MAJOR JOHN DOE . . .

Starting with statistics

Here's another "don't" for opening a radio or TV story. Don't start with an important statistic if you can delay the statistic until you've caught the listener's attention.

EXAMPLE:

Poor:

FOURTEEN NEW TANKS ARRIVED FOR DISTRIBUTION TO THE SECOND ARMORED CAVALRY REGIMENT TODAY. THE NEW M-ONE TANKS WERE ORDERED LAST YEAR BY HEADQUARTERS USAREUR TO BEEF UP THE BORDER.

Better:

U-S ARMY EUROPE IS BEEFING UP ITS BORDER DEFENSES. FOURTEEN NEW M-ONE TANKS ARRIVED TODAY FOR DISTRIBUTION TO THE SECOND ARMORED CAVALRY REGIMENT.

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SELF-EVALUATION EXERCISE

Exercise 3:

Use the facts given in each exercise to write a broadcast lead sentence.

1. Who: Two American soldiers stationed with the 3rd Infantry Division in Wuerzburg, Germany. SP4 John Doe and SGT Jim Smith.

   What: Received award from German police for safe driving during the month of December.

   Where: Municipal Police Presidium, Wuerzburg, Germany.

   When: Friday, March 12th, 1984 (yesterday)

   Source: 3rd Infantry Division PAO

2. Who: SFC John Smedley, Co A 1st Bn, 13th Armor, Ft. Knox, KY.

   What: Killed in car accident.

   Where: On Post Road, near the shopping center complex, Ft. Knox, KY.

   When: Late last night (January 12th, 1984)

   Source: Ft. Knox PAO, LTC John Smith

3. Who: Twenty-four year old Army Private Steven Jones of Ft. Jackson, S.C.

   What: Wins Army-wide Photo of the Year contest.

   When: 1983 competition

   Where: Judging results released in Washington last Monday, January 10th, 1984. (story is being written on Tuesday January 11th for release on Wednesday January 12th.)

   Source: ARNEWS story-No. 235, 10 January 1984, OCPA, (Office of the Chief of Public Affairs, Washington, D.C.)

ANSWERS TO SELF-EVALUATION EXERCISE

Self-evaluation Exercise 3:

Your answers should be similar to these:

1. WUERZBURG POLICE HONORED TWO SOLDIERS FROM THE THIRD INFANTRY DIVISION FOR SAFE DRIVING YESTERDAY.
2. A FORT KNOX SOLDIER IS DEAD FOLLOWING A CAR ACCIDENT ON POST YESTERDAY.
3. A FORT JACKSON PRIVATE IS THE WINNER OF THE 1983 ARMY-WIDE PHOTO COMPETITION.

SELF-EVALUATION EXERCISE

Exercise 4:

Using only the uppercase, proper style and punctuation, correctly rewrite these stories. You may substitute words, eliminate material and rearrange the copy if you wish.

1. THE ARMY SAYS IT WILL TEST A NEW SUMMER FATIGUE UNIFORM ACCORDING TO AN ARMY SPOKESPERSON. THE UNIFORM WILL BE MORE DURABLE AND COMFORTABLE THAN THE CURRENT FATIGUES. IT IS TO BE TESTED AT FORT SMOKEY LOUISIANA BEGINNING IN APRIL AND ENDING IN AUGUST.

2. SPRING WILL BE HARSHER THIS YEAR WEATHER WISE ACCORDING TO THE NATIONAL WEATHER BUREAU. THE BITTER COLD WILL LASH OUT ACROSS THE ENTIRE COUNTRY NATIONAL WEATHER CHIEF METEOROLOGIST JOHNNY HURRICANE SAID TEMPERATURES WILL HOVER BELOW THE FREEZING MARK UNTIL LATE APRIL.

3. CHARLESTON, WEST VIRGINIA, WILL BE THE NEW HOME FOR AMERICA'S HOCKEY HALL OF FAME, THE NATIONAL HOCKEY LEAGUES'S DECISION WAS MADE EARLY THIS MORNING FRIDAY, JAN 12.

4. FRANTIC FRENCHMEN WENT INTO A FRENZY FRIDAY, MAY 10TH WHEN THEIR FOOTBALL TEAM THE PARIS PATRIOTS WON THE WORLD SOCCER CHAMPIONSHIP 2-1 OVER COLUMBIA SOUTH AMERICA. THE TEAM CAPTAIN JEAN PIERRE SAID WE STOOD SHOULDER TO SHOULDER, MUCH SHARPER ON OFFENSE THAN THE COLUMBIAN NATIONAL TEAM.

ANSWERS TO SELF-EVALUATION EXERCISE

Self-evaluation Exercise 4:

Your answers should be similar to these:

1. THE ARMY SAYS IT WILL TEST A NEW SUMMER FATIGUE UNIFORM AT FORT SMOKEY, LOUISIANA STARTING IN APRIL. ACCORDING TO AN ARMY SPOKESMAN THE NEW FATIGUES ARE DESIGNED TO BE MORE CCMFORTABLE AND DURABLE. TESTING WILL CONTINUE THROUGH AUGUST.

2. THE NATIONAL WEATHER BUREAU SAYS THE ENTIRE NATION IS IN FOR A HARSH SPRING. ACCORDING TO CHIEF METEOROLOGIST JOHNNY HURRICANE, TEMPERATURES WILL BE BELOW THE FREEZING MARK UNTIL LATE APRIL.

3. AMERICA'S HOCKEY HALL OF FAME WILL BE BUILT IN CHARLESTON, WEST VIRGINIA. THE NATIONAL HOCKEY LEAGUE MADE ITS DECISION EARLY THIS MORNING.

4. FRANCE WON SOCCER'S WORLD CUP FRIDAY WITH A 2 TO 1 VICTORY OVER COLUMBIA. THE TEAM CAPTAIN OF THE CHAMPION PARIS PATRIOTS—JEAN PIERRE—SAID HIS CLUB WAS MUCH SHARPER ON OFFENSE THAN THE COLOMBIAN TEAM.

TELEVISION NEWS TECHNIQUES

In talking about radio and television news we've summarized radio and TV writing under the oral style. Both radio and TV are written for the ear. Radio and TV newsmen have a common problem . . . producing material which will catch and hold the interest of people through the spoken word.

But TV involves seeing as well as hearing, and this combination permits and often requires techniques not recommended for the ear alone.

TV News was originally silent film to which the reporter added words. Silent film gave way to sound-on-film (SOF) where the on the scene announcer actually placed his narration on the film at the time of filming. Now videotape recordings (VTR's) are predominantly used.

FUSION BETWEEN WORDS AND PICTURES

The important task in TV newswriting is to create immediate fusion between words and pictures. Few pictures can tell a news story without the addition of words. The viewer can see a still photo, a videotape, or a motion picture film clip of a news event, but the story telling ability of the picture is very limited. The newscaster must bring the story alive and complete it with words.

Through his eyes, the viewer "sees" the news in pictures, as the eye telegraphs the message to the brain. Through his ears the viewer "hears" the news, with his ear also telegraphing certain messages to the brain. The skilled TV writer combines pictures with words so that there is immediate fusion of the two sets of messages—video and audio. Remember audio should support video.

In creating this fusion between words and pictures the TV newswriter runs into the problem of moving his audience from topic to topic to an even greater degree than does the radio writer.

The TV viewer has three difficulties:

- Seeing the picture
- Hearing the picture
- Translating the picture and words into a general understanding of the topic

This viewing, listening and translating frequently requires greater concentration than does the simple act of hearing. Hence, the writer's task of smoothly moving the TV viewer from topic to topic increases as the viewer's concentration increases.

WRITING TO THE PICTURE

Writing to the picture requires a very specialized skill. You'll write two cues, both audio and video. In other words, you'll write for the times the viewer will see only the newscaster as well as when the viewer will see only the picture. You must be aware of the competition for the viewer's attention that exists between sound and picture.

When the camera is on the newscaster, you'll want words to dominate. BUT when the camera is on the picture, you'll want to subordinate the words so that they'll explain, supplement and fuse the picture.

Writing to the picture can't be taught by formula. It can't be standardized. You'll learn it only by writing to pictures in many different news situations.

WRITING TO FILM/VIDEOTAPE

Ideally, all TV news film/tape should be shot and edited so that scripts can be written to exact scene content. This is impossible, however, because frequently the writer must refer to people, places and facts that can't be photographed.

So the photographer and writer must work together for a compromise. The photographer shoots as many specifics as possible. He also shoots cutaway scenes and general scenes which will assist the writer in telling the story without the writer having to write to those scenes specifically.

In the case of many accident victims, the photographer will be unable to take pictures of persons involved. Yet those persons must be identified. So the writer identifies these specific individuals while the viewer is looking at the aspects of the accident scene which help him understand the event.

The news script is the most common type of television script. There are three formats that are used frequently.

- Voice-over
- Sound on film/Tape
- Chroma-key/Effects/Graphics

VOICE-OVER

The voice-over is where only the newscaster's voice is heard while a videotape or film is seen on the TV screen. The newscaster is usually seen at the beginning and end of the story. The director will start the film or tape where it is marked on the script. To assist the newscaster the writer may place "on cues" in the script. "On-cues" allow the newscaster to pace his delivery so that what he is talking about appears on the screen. For example, the newscaster starts reading the story on camera and the director will start the tape or film where it is indicated. Then, when the newscaster gets to his first "on-cue" he stops and looks at the monitor until he sees the "on-cue," scene. When he sees it he starts reading again till the next "on cue" and continues the process throughout the story. The following script illustrates the voice-over and use of "on cues."

AWARDS CEREMONY	FEBRUARY 10, 1984
(40 SECONDS)	FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
	NEWSCASTER
NEWSCASTER	TWO SOLDIERS WERE AWARDED THE ARMY COMMENDATION MEDAL FOR HEROISM IN KAISERSLAUTERN TODAY.
SIL-45 SEC AWARDS CEREMONY	THE SOLDIERS ARE STAFF SERGEANT JOHN DOE AND PRIVATE FIRST CLASS BOB KOBER. BOTH SOLDIERS ARE ASSIGNED TO THE SECOND GENERAL HOSPITAL IN LANDSTUHL.
MEDIUM CLOSE UP OF APARTMENT	(ON CUE) THEY WERE CITED FOR THEIR DARING RESCUE OF A BABY BOY FROM A THIRD FLOOR BURNING APARTMENT.
CLOSE UP OF CHILD'S PARENTS	(ON CUE) ALSO PRESENT AT THE CEREMONY WERE THE CHILD'S PARENTS SERGEANT AND MRS. JOHN SMITH. SMITH IS A FLIGHT TECHNICIAN ASSIGNED TO RAMSTEIN AIR BASE.
CLOSE UP OF GENERAL	(ON CUE) THE KAISERSLAUTERN COMMUNITY COMMANDER GENERAL JOHN SAMPSON PRESENTED THE AWARDS.
NEWSCASTER	THE TWO SOLDIERS WERE ALSO GIVEN THREE-DAY PASSES BY THEIR UNIT FOR THEIR EFFORTS.

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SOUND ON FILM/TAPE

When you use sound-on-film or tape, additional information will be required on the script. When you work with this type of script, you are usually writing a lead-in to a completed report. For example, let's look at the same story but assume that an Electronic News Gathering (ENG) team from your station covered the story and has a completely edited story with video and audio. Before bringing the story to the newsroom, the reporter would write a lead-in for the newscaster. The script would look something like this:

VIDEO	AUDIO
NEWSCASTER	TWO SOLDIERS RECEIVED THE ARMY COMMENDATION MEDAL FOR HEROISM TODAY IN KAISERSLAUTERN. SERGEANT BOB PUTMAN HAS THE STORY.
VTR #5 SOT	SOT: 45 SECONDS OUTCUE: From Kaiserslautern I'm Sergeant Bob Putman for AFN News.

Note that there are three elements to the SOF/SOT script. There is the lead, tape number and length and the outcue. SOT indicates it is Sound on Tape. Notice that the outcue is a standard one, with the station call letters and reporter's name. In many cases when the outcue is the standard reporter close after outcue you simply write SOC for standard outcue.

CHROMA-KEY/EFFECTS/GRAPHICS

If you did not have any film or tape and the story was going to be read by the newscaster you would need to script in slides or graphics. Chroma-key is the electronic process that inserts a picture over the newscaster's shoulder. The wall or window behind the newscaster is usually blue or green and it is this color that triggers the key or insert. Chroma-key has been replaced in most stations by digital video effects. A digital video effects unit can electronically compress a picture and insert it over the newscaster's shoulder. A colored background is not required for this process and the insert is much cleaner. Sometimes with chroma-key you get a blue halo around the newscaster's head. The network newscasts use digital video effects to insert the graphics and pictures behind their anchors. Regardless of whether it is chroma-key or digital video effects, the scripting process is the same. Your script would look something like this:

VIDEO	AUDIO
C/K	TWO SOLDIERS RECEIVED THE ARMY . . .
AWARDS CEREMONY GRAPHIC	XXX XXXXXX XXXX XXXX

If you use more than one visual, you would triple space between them. Some stations that don't retype their copy will indicate in the margin of the teletype story the graphic or slide that will be used.

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SELF-EVALUATION EXERCISE

Exercise 5:

1. When only the newscaster's voice is heard over film or videotape, this is called a:

   a. soundbite
   b. voice-over
   c. sound on film/tape

2. In writing a TV news script, audio should support:

   a. the newscaster
   b. video
   c. the outcue

3. The video information on a TV script appears on which side?

   a. left
   b. right

4. In writing for television, you write two cues. Name them.

   a. _____ b. _____

5. The most common type of television script is the:

   a. production script.
   b. news script.
   c. feature script.
   d. documentary script.

ANSWERS TO SELF-EVALUATION EXERCISE

Self-evaluation Exercise 5:

1. b. voice-over
2. b. video
3. a. left
4. a. audio b. video
5. b. news script

SPORTS

The rudiments of writing broadcast news copy apply to writing broadcast sports stories. The same fundamentals that apply to developing the lead, writing the body, punctuating and adhering to style, are all part of the successful broadcast sports story.

Colorful writing and vivid expressions are hallmarks of sports writing. Many writers, however, lean upon trite and overworked phrases and descriptions that have lost all vitality. The best writing is that which tells what happened or how it happened—concisely, simply and accurately. It can be accomplished in straightforward everyday English. "The lanky first baseman" may give the listener an image, but "the six foot first baseman" is more accurate.

When you develop the lead sentence for a broadcast sports story you should immediately tell the listener who won. "The Fort Knox Redskins shut out the Louisville Knights 15 to 0 last night." Then develop the remaining facts in descending order of importance. Your story body will tell the rest. For example, how the runs were scored; weather conditions; the stars, including the winning and losing pitchers; major scoring highlights; league standings as a result of the outcome and any other major colorful events.

Several techniques are used to report the outcome before the winning team or vice versa. A good rule of thumb is to be consistent. The sports fan is a very close listener and he is very fussy about how his sports are given to him. He will get used to your style and expect it every time he tunes in.

It was pointed out earlier in this lesson that news and sports copy should be clear, concise and accurate in order that the listener can get it straight the first time around. Remember you must report it in such a way that the listener has it right the first time.

One final word on sports writing. Because the final score is the most important element in the story, it is a good rule to repeat the score at the end of the report.

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SELF-EVALUATION EXERCISE

Exercise 6:

Using the given facts, write a sports story for broadcast. Pay close attention to punctuation and style mentioned earlier in this lesson.

SLOW PITCH SOFTBALL (FRIDAY 12 MAY)
FT. YESTERDAY YANKEES 5—FT CAPSTONE SHORT SOX—0
FT. YESTERDAY—5 RUNS, 10 HITS, 5 ERRORS
FT. CAPSTONE—0 RUNS, 5 HITS, 5 ERRORS
WINNING PITCHER—DAVID STEWART, 18 STRIKEOUTS
LOSING PITCHER—RON WOODY—9 STRIKEOUTS
THE LOSS DROPPED THE SHORT SOX TO THE CELLAR AND MOVED THE YANKS INTO FIRST PLACE
ONE HOME RUN—BOB LEVY DROVE IN 4 RUNS WITH A "GRAND SLAM" IN THE TOP OF THE 4TH INNING

ANSWERS TO SELF-EVALUATION EXERCISE

Self-evaluation Exercise 6:

Your answer should look something like this:

THE FORT YESTERDAY "YANKEES" SHUT OUT THE FORT CAPSTONE "SHORT SOX" 5 TO 0 IN SLOW PITCH ACTION FRIDAY. THE "YANKEES" SCORED 5 RUNS ON 10 HITS AND 5 ERRORS. THE "SOX" WERE SCORELESS ON 5 HITS AND 5 ERRORS. SLUGGER BOB LEVY CONNECTED FOR A GRAND SLAM IN THE FOURTH FOR THE "YANKEES." THE WINNING PITCHER WAS DAVE STEWART WITH 18 STRIKEOUTS. RON WOODY HAD NINE STRIKEOUTS IN THE LOSING EFFORT. THE WIN PUTS THE "YANKEES" IN FIRST PLACE IN THE ARMY LEAGUE AND DROPS THE "SOX" TO LAST PLACE. THE FINAL SCORE AGAIN—"YANKEES" 5, "SHORT SOX" 0.

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PRE-TEST/POST TEST ANSWER KEY

Each part of an answer has a value of one point. The total possible score is 30 points. A passing score is 25 points.

1. CLEAR CURRENT CONCISE
   COMPLETE CONVERSATIONAL CORRECT
2. help the announcer pause.
3. c. 20 words
4. a. 25-THOUSAND DOLLARS
   b. EIGHT-TENTHS
   c. 8:30 A-M
   d. FOUR-POINT-SIX
   e. 18TH CORPS
5. c. whenever possible
6. b. false
7. b. POST COMMANDER, GENERAL HARRISON
8. a. at the beginning of a sentence
9. a. should be avoided
10. d. whenever a difficult word is used in the copy
11. b. should be spelled out on the first reference
12. d. 150 words per minute
13. a. left
14. d. 60
15. a. slugline b. release date
    c. copy length d. release line
16. c. it is a general what happened lead
17. b. on cue
18. a. in the lead